

More Than Pocket Change

It takes a considerable effort — and budget — to run the largest beef cattle show in the world.

by *Crystal Albers*

The National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) has been a staple in the lives of junior Angus members since it began 37 years ago. Today, the crowning event of the junior organization is known nationwide for its size, ability to amaze and inspire youth, and, mostly, for its grandeur. If there were a Superbowl in a junior showman's life, this would be it.

The weeklong event encompasses the largest single-breed beef show in the world, a national showmanship competition, life skills contests, state competitions, mentoring programs and social activities, meetings, educational seminars, tradeshow and

fundraisers, and a host of other ceremonies and awards functions. Those who attend quickly become familiar with its appeal. Everything about it — from the steady hum of costumed juniors and rushing parents, to the sweet smell of woodchips and well-groomed cattle — awakens the senses and greets junior participants with a mounting sense of excitement. A trip to the show also evokes an unexpected familiarity in even the most veteran of showpeople, sparking flashbacks of a youth spent at the helm of a show halter and Angus tradition.

But for all the glory and splendor that has become the National Junior Angus Show,

there lies a growing reality that can concern even the purest Angus enthusiast — cost.

It's a tall order to host the world's largest single-breed beef cattle show. Easily boasting more than 600 exhibitors each year, the event regularly draws an influx of thousands of people and 1,000 or more show animals. Even once show coordinators ensure available accommodations, there are still the basics to consider — like parking, tables, seating, meals and concessions, electrical and water supplies, premiums and awards, backdrops, signs, meeting and contest rooms, wood chips, tie-outs, barns, a show arena, audiovisual equipment, Internet access, tradeshow accommodations and more. Not to mention a massive coordination effort involving hundreds of volunteers, Association staff, fairgrounds employees and other contract workers.

It's no small task, and no small budget.

As the size and scope of the NJAS has grown, so have its needs, and, therefore, costs. Today, the event is an experience that no junior would trade. But as the final day of the event draws to a close and show-goers finish packing up their belongings for the long journey home, the pencil-pusher types are left wondering, "Who foots the bill?"

As Director of Association Activities and Junior Activities James Fisher explains, it's a mixed bag.

Premiums and price tags

The NJAS is the biggest event of the year from an attendance as well as a financial investment standpoint, Fisher says. In fact, the total cost for the NJAS is in the neighborhood of \$500,000, including in-kind donations and costs incurred by both the American Angus Association and the hosting state(s).

Not surprisingly, "Running the junior show takes a considerable amount of



PHOTOS BY SHAINA ROSE HERMEL

► The Indiana NJAS committee, co-chaired by Sam Carter (left), presented a check for \$5,000 to Haley Rieff (center) and John Pfeiffer Jr., junior co-chairs of the 2007 NJAS, to assist their efforts to host the 2007 show.

American Angus Association NJAS financial responsibility

Facilities (including initial set-up of panels, chairs, tables, etc.)

Cattle barns

Tie-outs

Show arena

Line-up area (if separate from showing)

Grooming area (if separate from cattle barns)

Electricity and water

Meeting rooms

Contest rooms

Office space

Space for tradeshow

Tables and chairs

Cleanup and janitorial services

Office equipment

Sound system

Lighting needs

Show arena

Security and first aid

Stage

Judges

Workshop and clinic expense

Premiums and awards

NJAA contests

NJAA Annual Meeting

Audiovisual expenses

Internet access

Show program

Staff expenses

Entry information packet

Signage

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coordination between the Association and the host state,” Fisher says.

The “host state” is generally the state in which the junior show will take place. A group of several representatives, usually from the state’s Angus associations, spearheads NJAS hosting responsibilities, often years in advance.

According to junior show guidelines, the site for the event is approved approximately three years in advance by the Association Board of Directors. Inquiries and letters of application are accepted by the Junior Activities Department and are continually reviewed until final site determination.

As Fisher points out, a host state must meet several prerequisites (see “Guidelines for hosting an NJAS” on page 218), including available fairgrounds or a coliseum, seating and nearby hotel accommodations. Once approved as a host state, organizers assume fundraising responsibilities and provide optional activities to complement the show, adequate chaperones for state-hosted activities, showing and facility decorations and backdrops.

State organizers also assist with arrival and check-in activities, coordinate and man an information office, conduct showing cleanup during the show and provide bedding materials at the show site.

Meanwhile, the Association shares in the cost and responsibilities of the show, allocating approximately \$250,000 toward the

event to cover such costs as facilities, office equipment, show arena, electricity and water, and more. (See “American Angus Association NJAS financial responsibility.”)

“Essentially, the Association provides the funding for all basic necessities of producing the National Junior Angus Show, and the hosting state pays for all the optional extras that give the show its personality and uniqueness,” Fisher explains.

The Association works with the host state to contact and contract motel accommodations and fairground facilities, and coordinates with veterinarians and heeds health regulations. The Association also provides premiums, awards, show

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programs and necessary materials, and official photography. The Association selects judges; designates work schedules; provides insurance; and pays total expenses for cattle barns, tie-outs, judging arena, contest and meeting rooms, and other related costs.

Host with the most

With basic show costs covered by the Association, the host state is given the option to decide what it wants to provide to make the event unique, Fisher says. The price and elaborateness of the items and events provided by the state are decided upon and selected by the hosting state committees.

Sam Carter knows the process well. Carter was involved in NJAS planning when Indiana hosted the event in 1998, and he served as chairman of the Executive Committee that hosted the 2006 show in Indianapolis, Ind. He says raising money for the event provides a significant, yet attainable, challenge that requires coordination and a well-planned budget.

"When we started out, we were fortunate that we had hosted previous national junior shows," Carter says. The Indiana group was able to base its planning on past experiences, and it had a jump-start on fundraising with some leftover funds raised from the 1998 NJAS.

Using past experience and numbers from the 2004 show, the committee began planning its budget and assigning subcommittee chairs. With a goal of raising

\$250,000, state members worked on raising money through good, old-fashioned fundraising as well as a grant application to the Indiana Livestock Promotion Fund, a program specifically designed to help fund such events.

Through lots of hard work and several creative projects, the group exceeded its goal, Carter says.

It wasn't easy, though.

"I'm not going to say it was easy, because we don't do it on a regular basis," he says. "But the generosity we received was overwhelming."

The difficulty lies in skyrocketing event costs from year to year. Fisher says the cost to the host state has increased for two reasons. "Number 1, there's just the increased cost of doing business. But mostly it's Number 2, each state wants to provide as much if not more than the previous host state."

And that has created a "race" to provide the best, most elaborate show to date.

"When you start doing a little more, that increases cost," Carter says. "Our budget for 1998 was \$110,000. Here we are in 2006, nine years later, and our budget is close to \$300,000 — almost triple that of what it was in 1998."

Providing meals for the growing junior show crowd is the biggest hurdle to overcoming show costs, Carter says. Although it's not a required responsibility of the host state, it has become a welcome tradition at the weeklong event.

"We started out with the belief that we could cut the meals down considerably, but we ended up furnishing most of

them," he adds. That required serving about 2,000 people per meal, three times per day. "Take that times five, and suddenly we're feeding the equivalent of 30,000 people," Carter says. "I'm amazed we got it done as economically as we did."

Glenda Schroeder, who chairs the 2008 NJAS Executive Committee with her husband, Doug, admits the meals are the largest expense, but willing volunteers and donations from food companies have eased the blow.

"We have a lot of people that participate and are willing to donate. We are fortunate that our fairgrounds works with us to put on meals at a fairly reasonable expense," she says.

Schroeder is also no stranger to the NJAS. She grew up in the industry, participating in national shows every year, and her children have all been active in the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). She hasn't missed a show since 1993, and her daughter, Lauren, still has two years left in the Association.

This is Schroeder's second bout with chairing a national show; she and Doug were chairmen of the event when Iowa hosted the 2000 NJAS. She says if budget

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Guidelines for hosting an NJAS

The following guidelines must be met in order for a state to host a National Junior Angus Show (NJAS).

- ▶ Fairgrounds or coliseum with stall space for at least 1,500 head, plus additional space for chutes, tack, booths, etc. (for a total of approximately 2,000 stalls)
- ▶ Seating for at least 2,400 people
- ▶ An arena that can handle classes of 15 head, plus a nearby make-up area
- ▶ Sufficient rooms for contests
- ▶ Office space and telephones
- ▶ Sufficient parking, tie-out space, washracks and electrical power and outlets
- ▶ Convenient restrooms and concessions
- ▶ Separate PA systems for barns and the showing

Motel accommodations must include at least 750 available rooms, with access to fairgrounds, and sufficient meeting and banquet rooms.

constraints become an issue, the state group will just have to start cutting back. "We want to furnish as much food as possible, but if the funding isn't there, we'll have to cut back on extras," she says. "Although, when you bring your family to nationals and you're feeding five people, it's a big saving for families to avoid having to go out and buy meals at every meal."

A priceless experience

With so much preparation and hands-on work involved with the NJAS, one could expect few willing hosts. But Fisher says each state has been eager to put on the event.

"There's a certain pride in bringing so many Angus people to your state," he says. "It's your time to show everyone what your state is all about and to get everyone involved."

That was one of three goals for the Indiana state committee. Carter says they hoped to 1) give juniors the opportunity to participate in developing, planning and executing an NJAS; 2) expose more people within the state to the Angus breed and the showing of Angus cattle on a national level; and 3) have an event that pulled the membership together toward a common goal.

"Those three goals were all reached," Carter proudly reports. "We had a fairly large turnover of junior members and Angus families that had not had the opportunity to be involved in hosting a show. When the idea was proposed, just about 100% of our people were enthused."

Fisher says the event wouldn't be possible without volunteers from hosting states.

"Without all of the volunteers, if we had to pay people to man these events and provide show services, the event would cost twice as much," he says.

In addition to willing volunteers, Indiana had a record-breaking number of juniors participate in the show and contests at the 2006 NJAS.

"Not only did we have tremendous participation in making the '06 show a success, we had 202 animals exhibited by 95 members from Indiana. That's an all-time high," Carter notes, adding that several of the youth who participated in the 2006

event were first-timers, some to both the NJAS and to Angus. "Most of them were favorably impressed, and they will stay involved."

Schroeder has seen a similar interest in her state from youth who, she says, would have most likely stayed home otherwise.

"We have some neighbor kids who wanted to know what the national show was all about," Schroeder says. "They had always gone to county fairs and were just so impressed with everything that was going on that they wanted to come to the [NJAS]. Well, in 2008 they're coming."

Judging by the growing popularity of the NJAS, they won't be the only ones. Of course, Schroeder will be among those making the annual trip next summer. Like

so many families in the Angus industry, the Schroeders consider the NJAS a much-loved tradition.

"The big joke at work is, 'Glenda, do you ever take a vacation without four-legged animals?'" Schroeder laughs. "But that's just what we enjoy doing. Being together with the family. That's our love."



Author's Note: *The American Angus Association Board of Directors allocated additional funds toward the NJAS during its June 2006 meeting. The Association will provide funding for the class winner awards at \$25 per class; contest judges' appreciation gifts at \$22.50 per judge; and \$3,000 toward the queen's luncheon starting with the 2006 NJAS. The Association will also work with the host state to coordinate the bedding arrangements for the NJAS.*



PHOTO BY SHEILIA STANNARD